

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION

Thursday, October 5. 1710.

I Am now coming to talk to you about Elections of Parliament Men — the Queen has Dissolv'd the Old Parliament, the *whys* and *wherefores* of that Management, the Reasons for or against, the Dangers of doing or not doing it—Are now to no purpose to speak of, the Thing is over, and the Blow is given—I think to Examine into what is to be done next, is far better, than to make Reflections upon what is past.

Besides, the first fright is over, the apprehensions of the Consequences and Surprizes are over, and we find the Work of the day is not Regretting the Old, but Choosing a New one —

The Way to make the Nation less feel the loss of the Old House, is to be careful in the Election of a new one; and this admits of a great deal of Debate — In which I shall not so much pursue the usual Topicks, of which the Town is full, to give Characters of the Men you are to Choose, as to enquire into the Manner; Reason, Nature, and Behaviour of Choosing, and the Conduct of the Choosers, which at this Time gives me a Melancholly Prospect, of the Issue of the Elections now in View.

It is a very unhappy Thing to this Nation, and how to ~~get~~ it Remedied, I must acknowledge, I ~~know~~ not; that in sight of

of all the Laws against Bribery, and corrupt Practices in Elections; in sight of all the Examples made by the House, upon the Hearing of such Cases—— Yet, if I am not misinform'd from most Parts of this Island, the Treatings, the Caballings, the Briberies, and Corruptions, as well as the Heats and Animositities of Parties, against this approaching Election, surmount all that have ever gone before them; never so much Money spent, nor so foolishly; never so much Drunkenness, Ravings, Feuds, Raging of Parties, at least not in my Time, have been seen in this Nation.

It has been matter of Wonder to me all along, and will remain a Mystery to all Posterity, till our Experience of the Mischief helps our discovery, upon what HONEST Foundation, any Man can expend a Thousand, two or three, of Pounds, to be let into a House where he cannot get one Shilling HONESTLY, by sitting; there is but one just pretence, and that is the Service of his Country, purely upon a self-denying Principle to do good, and to keep out ill Men that would do Evil—— But alas! when we come to give that for the Reason, we are forc'd to blush in the speaking it, we deliver it with so much uncertainty, hesitation, and distrust of the Truth of Fact; that we betray our selves, own it is a good pretence, but that it is no more than a Pretence, and that such a thing as that publick Spirit, is not to be found in the World.

What then remains, but that the End is as Vile as the Means, the Design as Corrupt as the Practice; that they that buy other Mens Votes will sell their own, that they who Debauch their Country to get in, will betray their Country when they are in—— It is a known Story of William Rufus the next King of England, after William the Conqueror; that as he Sold all the Ecclesiastical Preferments of his Kingdom, for the most Money he could get—— And having a Rich Abbey to dispose of—— His Monks standing all about, to bid for it, he observed one to look on, as more unconcern'd than the rest—— And turning to him, the King says, and how much will'st thou give

for it? Indeed says the Monk, not one Farthing, for it is against my Conscience; sayest thou so, says the King, then thou art the fittest Man to have it, and so immediately gave it him, tho' it very much stood against his own Covetous Humour.

The Men that will give nothing to be Chosen, are the Men fittest for us to Choose, and most likely to Act faithfully, when they are Chosen; and were this an Age, wherein Reasoning would take Place, wherein Men would give themselves leave to think what they are doing, and what the End of Choosing Representatives is, it might be to some purpose, to direct them in the Case; but to any one who knows what Temper we are now in, this will appear a very insignificant Work, and therefore I shall not so much argue, who and who you should Choose, or refuse, as how you ought to Manage your selves in the Thing we call Choice.

It is too true, that the Bribery, the Violence, the Tumults, the Corruption, are not the peculiar of a Party, so I am not to Load this, or that Party with it, as their perticular Crime—— I own most readily, both Sides are but too Guilty, too forward to imitate one another, and both pursue that one Thing, which of all the Publick Transactions in the World, should be the most Clear, Impartial, and Unbias'd, with the greatest Heat, Feud, Partiality, and Injustice imaginable.

It is also true, that each Party makes use of the Practice of the other, as their defence for these Things; THEY WILL, therefore I MUST, and there is really something in the Excuse—— If I will not spend my Money, and treat the People, my Opposer will, and so I shall lose it—— This has an unhappy Force in the Argument, that cannot be Resist'd; THUS the Spring of all the Mischief lies in the People, who are so to be Corrupted, and of whom it may be said, That they really cut their own Throats, and that by the most Obstinate, as well as most Voluntary Self-Murther, in the World.

We will be Corrupted, and will be Debauch'd, and made Drunk, and he that will not do it, we will not Choose him, we call him Narrow, Stingy, and good for nothing, for he won't spend his Money — And therefore we have no kindness for him, he shall not Represent us; I do confess, a sober Parliament, to be sent up from a Drunken Nation, seems to me not to be a true Representative — What Principle can they All from? If they are to make Laws to suppress Vice, Debauchery, and Disorder, they make a Law that themselves shall never be Chosen again, since the Law they make, is to suppress that very Thing, which they obtain'd it by.

Besides, it seems the most inconsistent Thing in the World, that Legislators and Redressors of a Nation's Mischief, should obtain that Title, from the Practice of the grossest Debaucheries, and from the very Crimes they are to make Laws against — I say the Grossest, since the Disorders of our Elections, are not the common kind of Drunkenness, in which Men Drink, talk Idly, fall asleep, and wake again sober, and generally do no Body any harm but themselves — But in these Elections, you make Men's very Principles Drunk, as well as their Heads, and such is the Heat of the Debauch, that it continues from three Years, to three Years, from Family to Family; and if Tory High-Flying Delusion possess your own Head, it sticks to your Posterity, runs in the Blood, 'tis a Complot Entail, the Tenure runs, *ad se, tuisque Hæredibus in Æternum.*

Nor is this all, but as it Descends to your Posterity, so the strong Possession, for 'tis no less, keeps hold on the Object, and when once he has Sold his Vote, he is a Mercenary for ever after: Drunk at one Election, Drunk at every Election; till 'tis as Natural and as certain, as the Election itself; and of many, you have it plainly told you in down right Rustick, that they will not Vote without it.

A Gentleman who I have the Honour to know, was the other day speaking of this very Thing with Concern; he was oblig'd, according to the horrid drudgery of the

Case, to go with his Steward, and two or three Gentlemen from Town to Town, in the County where he stands Candidate, and almost from House to House, to solicit the Freeholders, or in our New Parliamentary Speech, to make his Interest — His Steward brings in to the House where he attended, a Country Fellow, a Miller by Trade, who was a Freeholder, and had a Right to Vote — He carries him into the next Room, and there the Candidate heard the Countryman and his Steward enter into this Blessed Discourse.

The Steward tells him the usual Story, that his Master did set up for the County, and was come to that Town to make his Interest — And then concludes; *Honest Master Miller, I hope you will give my Master your Vote.*

My Vote, says the Miller — *Your Master does not use honest Fellows as if he expected they should Vote for him.*

Why so, says the Steward, *what's the Matter?*

Why, he's so Stingy and so Narrow, says the Miller, *he won't spend his Money.*

Nay, says the Steward, *don't say so, we shall find it otherwise; I am sure; it has Cost my Master above one Hundred Pounds a day, in this Town and the next.*

Prisbee what dost talk of a Hundred Pounds, says the Miller, *why there's Sir Thomas has spent 500l. he browns about his Money bravely, why, all the Town have been drinking this whole Week at his Cost, he's the Man for us.*

Why that's intolerable, says the Steward, *the People must be all Drunk then sure says he?*

Drunk, says the Miller, *Ay, what should they do? The whole Town is Drunk or Mad, they will all go for him, he is so Generous, and spends his Money so freely, there's no Body can Refuse him.*

No, says the Steward, *but my Master is not for making you all Drunk, you know he is a sober, Honest Gentleman.*

Is he not for making us Drunk? Well says the Miller, and we are not for making him Parliament Man then.

No! why will none but he that makes you all Drunk, get your Voice, says the Steward?

No indeed, says the Miller, nor I, I'll never Vote for the Man that won't make me Drunk; what do you take me for a Fool—I am always Drunk for a Week, every Election, and I will be so; and if

your Master won't make me Drunk, I won't Vote for him by G ——. I'll go and Vote for Sir Thomas ——— And away went the Miller.

This was Matter of Fact; and is not this now a very proper Foundation, from whence to Elect Members, to make Laws against this very Drunkennells we speak of?

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